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limb drop from her hold, and commenced rocking herself to and fro, uttering a low and peculiar species of moan, which to her terrified patient sounded as a death summons.

"Murther-an'-ages, Peggy, sure it's not going to die I am!" exclaimed Brian.

"Och, widdy! widdy!" roared the afflicted spouse, now giving full vent to her anguish, "it's little I thought, Brian ashore machree, when I married you in your beauty and your prime, that I'd ever live to cry the keen over you—ochone, ochone! 'tis you was the good ould man in airnest—och! och!"

"Arrah, Peggy!" interposed the object of her rather premature lamentations.

"Oh, don't talk to me—don't talk to me. I'll never hold up my head again, so I won't!" continued the widow that was to be, in a tone that quickly brought all the house about her, and finally all the neighbours. Great was the uproar that ensued, and noisy the explanations, which, however, afforded no small relief to the minds of all persons not immediately concerned in the welfare of the doomed Brian. Peggy was inconsolable at the prospect of such a bereavement. Meny clung in despair to the poor tottering old man, her grief too deep for lamentation, while he hobbled over his prayers as fast and as correctly as his utter dismay would permit him. Next morning he was unable to rise, refused all nourishment, and called vehemently for the priest. Every hour he became worse; he was out of one faint into another; announced symptoms of every complaint that ever vexed mankind, and declared himself affected by a pain in every member, from his toe to his cranium. No wonder it was a case to puzzle the doctor. The man of science could make nothing of it—swore it was the oddest complication of diseases that ever he had heard of—and strongly recommended that the patient be tossed in a blanket, and his wife treated to a taste of the horse-pond. Father Coffey was equally nonplussed.

"What ails you, Brian?"

"An all-overness of some kind or other, your reverence," groaned the sufferer in reply, and the priest had to own himself a bothered man. Nothing would induce him to rise—"where's the use in a man's gettin' up, an' he goin' to die?" was his answer to those who endeavoured to rouse him—"isn't it a dale dacinter to die in bed like a Christian?"

"God's good!—maybe you won't die this time, Brian."

"Arrah, don't be talking—doesn't Peggy know best?" And with this undeniable assertion he closed all his arguments, receiving consolation from none, not even his heart-broken Meny. Despite of all his entreaties to be let die in peace, the doctor, who guessed how matters stood, was determined to try the effects of a blister, and accordingly applied one of more than ordinary strength, stoutly affirming that it would have the effect of the patient being up and walking on the morrow. A good many people had gathered into his cabin to witness the cure, as they always do when their presence could be best dispensed with; and to these Peggy, with tears and moans, was declaring her despair in all remedies whatever, and her firm conviction that a widow she'd be before Sunday, when Brian, roused a little by the uneasy stimulant from the lethargy into which they all believed him to be sunk, faintly expressed his wish to be heard.

"Peggy, agra," said he, "there's no denyin' but you're a wonderful woman entirely; an' since I'm goin', it would be a grate consolation to me if you'd tell us all how you found out the sickness was on me afore I knew it myself. It's just curiosity, agra—I wouldn't like to die, you see, without knowin' for why an' for what—it 'ud have a foolish look if any body axed me what I died of, an' me not able to tell them."

Peggy declared her willingness to do him this last favour, and, interrupted by an occasional sob, thus proceeded:—

"It was Thursday night week—troth I'll never forget that night, Brian ashore, if I live to be as ould as Noah—an' it was just after my first sleep that I fell drainin'. I thought I went down to Dan Keefe's to buy a taste ov mate, for ye all know he killed a *bullsheen* that day for the market ov Mooneen; an' I thought when I went into his house, what did I see hangin' up but an ugly *lane* carcase, an' not a bit too fresh neither, an' a strange man dividin' it with a hatchet; an' says he to me with a mighty grum look,

"Well, honest woman, what do you want?—is it to buy *bullsheen*?"

"Yes," says I, "but not the likes of that—it's not what we're used to."

"Divil may care," says he; 'I'll make bould to cut out a rib for you.'

"'Oh, don't if you please,' says I, puttin' out my hand to stop him; an' with that what does he do but he lifts the hatchet an' makes a blow at my hand, an' cuts the weddin' ring in two on my finger?"

"Dth! dth! dth!" was ejaculated on all sides by her wondering auditory, for the application of the dream to Brian was conclusive, according to the popular method of explaining such matters. They looked round to see how he sustained the brunt of such a fatal revelation. There he was sitting bolt upright in the bed, notwithstanding his unpleasant incumbrance, his mouth and eyes wide open.

"Why, thin, blur-an'-ages, Peggy Moran," he slowly exclaimed, when he and they had recovered a little from their surprise, "do you mane to tell me that's all that ailed me?"

Peggy and her coterie started back as he uttered this extraordinary inquiry, there being something in his look that portended his intention to leap out of bed, and probably display his indignation a little too forcibly, for, quiet as he was, his temper wasn't proof against a blister; but his bodily strength failed him in the attempt, and, roaring with pain, he resumed his recumbent position. But Peggy's empire was over—the blister had done its business, and in a few days he was able to stump about as usual, threatening to inflict all sorts of punishments upon any one who dared to laugh at him. A laugh is a thing, however, not easy to be controlled, and finally poor Brian's excellent temper was soured to such a degree by the ridicule which he encountered, that he determined to seek a reconciliation with young Brennan, pitch the decrees of fate to Old Nick, and give Father Coffey a job with the young couple.

To this resolution we are happy to say he adhered: still happier are we to say, that among the county records we have not yet met the name of his son-in-law, and that unless good behaviour and industry be declared crimes worthy of bringing their perpetrator to the gallows, there is very little chance indeed of Mickey Brennan fulfilling the prophecy of Peggy the Pishogue.

A. M'C.

A SHORT CHAPTER ON BUSTLES.

BUSTLES!—what are bustles? Ay, reader, fair reader, you may well ask that question. But some of your sex at least know the meaning of the word, and the use of the article it designates, sufficiently well, though, thank heaven! there are many thousands of my countrywomen who are as yet ignorant of both, and indeed to whom such knowledge would be quite useless. Would that I were in equally innocent ignorance! Not, reader, that I am of the feminine gender, and use the article in question; but my knowledge of its mysterious uses, and the various materials of which it is composed, has been the ruin of me. I will have inscribed on my tomb, "Here lies a man who was killed by a bustle!"

But before I detail the circumstances of my unhappy fate, it will perhaps be proper to give a description of the article itself which has been the cause of my undoing. Well, then, a bustle is

But the editor will perhaps object to this description as being too distinct and graphic. If so, then here goes for another less laboured and more characteristically mysterious.

A bustle is an article used by ladies to take from their form the character of the Venus of the Greeks, and impart to it that of the Venus of the Hottentots!

That ladies should have a taste so singular, may appear incredible; but there is no accounting for tastes, and I know to my cost that the fact is indisputable.

I made the discovery a few years since, and up to that time I had always borne the character of a sage, sedate, and promising young man—one likely to get on in the world by my exertions, and therefore sure to be helped by my friends. I was even, I flatter myself, a favourite with the fair sex too; and justly so, for I was their most ardent admirer; and there was one most lovely creature among them whom I had fondly hoped to have made my own. But, alas! how vain and visionary are our hopes of human happiness: such hopes with me had fled for ever! As I said before, I am a ruined man, and all in consequence of ladies' bustles.

In an unlucky hour I was in a ball-room, seated at a little distance from my fair one—my eyes watching her every air and look, my ears catching every sound of her sweet voice—when I heard her complain to a female friend, in tones of the softest whispering music, that she was oppressed with the

heat of the place. "My dear," her friend replied, "it must be the effect of your bustle. What do you stuff it with?" "Hair—horse-hair," was the reply. "Hair!—mercy on us!" says her friend, "it is no wonder you are oppressed—that's a hot-and-hot material truly. Why, you should do as I do—you do not see me fainting; and the reason is, that I stuff my bustle with hay—new hay!"

I heard no more, for the ladies, supposing from my eyes that I was a listener, changed the topic of conversation, though indeed it was not necessary, for at the time I had not the slightest notion of what they meant. Time, however, passed on most favourably to my wishes—another month, and I should have called my Catherine my own. She was on a visit to my sister, and I had every opportunity to make myself agreeable. We sang together, we talked together, and we danced together. All this would have been very well, but unfortunately we also walked together. It was on the last time we ever did so that the circumstance occurred which I have now to relate, and which gave the first death-blow to my hopes of happiness. We were crossing Carlisle-bridge, her dear arm linked in mine, when we chanced to meet a female friend; and wishing to have a little chat with her without incommoding the passengers, we got to the edge of the flag-way, near which at the time there was standing an old white horse, totally blind. He was a quiet-looking animal, and none of us could have supposed from his physiognomy that he had any savage propensity in his nature. But imagine my astonishment and horror when I suddenly heard my charmer give a scream that pierced me to the very heart!—and when I perceived that this atrocious old blind brute, having slowly and slyly swayed his head round, caught the—how shall I describe it?—caught my Catherine—really I can't say how—but he caught her; and before I could extricate her from his jaws, he made a reef in her garments such as lady never suffered. Silk gown, petticoat, bustle—everything, in fact, gave way, and left an opening—a chasm—an exposure, that may perhaps be imagined, but cannot be described.*

As rapidly as I could, of course, I got my fair one into a jarry, and hurried home, the truth gradually opening in my mind as to the cause of the disaster—it was, that the blind horse, hungry brute, had been attracted by the smell of my Catherine's bustle, made of hay—new hay!

Catherine was never the same to me afterwards—she took the most invincible dislike to walk with me, or rather, perhaps, to be seen in the streets with me. But matters were not yet come to the worst, and I had indulged in hopes that she would yet be mine. I had however taken a deep aversion to bustles, and even determined to wage war upon them to the best of my ability. In this spirit, a few days after, I determined to wreak my vengeance on my sister's bustle, for I found by this time that she too was emulous of being a Hot-tent beauty. Accordingly, having to accompany her and my intended wife to a ball, I stole into my sister's room in the course of the evening before she went into it to dress, and pouncing upon her hated bustle, which lay on her toilet table, I inflicted a cut on it with my penknife, and retired. But what a mistake did I make! Alas, it was not my sister's bustle, but my Catherine's! However, we went to the ball, and for a time all went smoothly on. I took out my Catherine as a partner in the dance; but imagine my horror when I perceived her gradually becoming thinner and thinner—losing her *enbonpoint*—as she danced; and, worse than that, that every movement which she described in the figure—the ladies' chain, the chassee—was accurately marked—recorded—on the chalked floor with—bran! Oh dear! reader, pity me: was ever man so unfortunate? This sealed my doom. She would never speak to me, or even look at me afterwards.

But this was not all. My character with the sex—ay, with both sexes—was also destroyed. I who had been heretofore, as I said, considered as an example of prudence and discretion for a young man, was now set down as a thoughtless, devil-may-care wag, never to do well: the men treated me coldly, and the women turned their backs upon me; and so thus in reality they made me what they had supposed I was. It was indeed no wonder, for I could never after see a lady with a bustle but I felt an irresistible inclination to laughter, and this too even on occasions when I should have kept a grave countenance. If I met a couple of country or other friends in the street, and inquired after their family—the cause, perhaps, of the mourning in which they were attired—while they were

telling me of the death of some father, sister, or other relative, I to their astonishment would take to laughing, and if there was a horse near us, give the lady a drag away to another situation. And if then I was asked the meaning of this ill-timed mirth, and this singular movement, what could I say? Why, sometimes I made the matter worse by replying, "Dear madam, it is only to save your bustle from the horse!"

Stung at length by my misfortunes and the hopelessness of my situation, I became utterly reckless, and only thought of carrying out my revenge on the bustles in every way in my power; and this I must say with some pride I did for a while with good effect. I got a number of the hated articles manufactured for myself, but not, reader, to wear, as you shall hear. Oh! no; but whenever I received an invitation to a party—which indeed had latterly been seldom sent me—I took one of these articles in my pocket, and, watching a favourable opportunity when all were engaged in the mazy figure of the dance, let it secretly fall amongst them. The result may be imagined—ay, reader, imagine it, for I cannot describe it with effect. First, the half-suppressed but simultaneous scream of all the ladies as it was held up for a claimant; next, the equally simultaneous movement of the ladies' hands, all quickly disengaged from those of their partners, and not raised up in wonder, but carried down to their—bustles! Never was movement in the dance executed with such precision; and I should be immortalised as the inventor of an attitude so expressive of sentiment and of feeling.

Alas! this is the only consolation now afforded me in my afflictions: I invented a new attitude—a new movement in the quadrille: let others see that it be not forgotten. I am now a banished man from all refined society: no lady will appear, where that odious Mr Bustle, as they call me, might possibly be; and so no one will admit me inside their doors. I have nothing left me, therefore, but to live out my solitary life, and vent my execration of bustles in the only place now left me—the columns of the Irish Penny Journal.



THE COMMON OTTER.

THE otter varies in size, some adult specimens measuring no more than thirty-six inches in length, tail inclusive, while others, again, are to be found from four and a half to five feet long. The head of the otter is broad and flat; its muzzle is broad, rounded, and blunt; its eyes small and of a semi-circular form; neck extremely thick, nearly as thick as the body; body long, rounded, and very flexible; legs short and muscular; feet furnished with five sharp-clawed toes, webbed to three-quarters of their extent; tail long, muscular, somewhat flattened, and tapering to its extremity. The colour of the otter is a deep blackish brown; the sides of the head, the front of the neck, and sometimes the breast, brownish grey. The belly is usually, but not invariably, darker than the back; the fur is short, and of two kinds; the inferior or woolly coat is exceedingly fine and close; the longer hairs are soft and glossy, those on the tail rather stiff and bristly. On either side of the nose, and just below the chin, are two small light-coloured spots. So much for the appearance of the otter: now we come to its dwelling. The otter is common to England, Ireland, and Scotland; a marine variety is also to be met with, differing from the common only in its superior size and more furry coat. Some naturalists have set them down as a different species: I am, however, disposed to regard them as a variety merely.

The native haunt of the otter is the river-bank, where amongst the reeds and sedge it forms a deep burrow, in which it brings forth and rears its young. Its principal food is fish, which it catches with singular dexterity. It lives almost wholly in the water, and seldom leaves it except to devour its prey; on land it does not usually remain long at any one time, and the slightest alarm is sufficient to cause it to plunge into the stream. Yet, natural as seems a watery residence to this creature, its hole is perfectly dry; were it to become otherwise, it would be quickly abandoned. Its entrance, indeed, is invariably under water, but its course then points upwards into the bank, towards the surface of the earth, and it is even provided with several lodges or apartments at different heights, into which it may retire in case of floods, throwing up the earth behind it as it proceeds into the re.

* A fact.